

# EPA to release report linking secondhand smoke to lung cancer

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WASHINGTON — In a long-delayed decision that could eventually have a major impact on the American workplace, the Environmental Protection Agency Thursday will conclude officially that exposure to "secondhand" cigarette smoke causes lung cancer in adults and greatly increases the risk of respiratory illnesses in children.

EPA administrator William K. Reilly's endorsement of a report by a panel of scientific advisors to the agency will end a contentious two-year review of the issue during which the panel's evidence and conclusions have been denounced repeatedly by the tobacco industry.

The EPA's endorsement of the scientific panel's findings will have no immediate practical impact, because the agency has no authority to

regulate indoor air pollution. But the move could have a significant influence on how local governments and the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) adopt and enforce workplace anti-smoking rules.

OSHA is in the beginning stages of gathering information on indoor air quality, a process that could lead to new federal rules on air pollution in the workplace. An OSHA spokesman

said Tuesday that "it's too early to tell" what the impact will be of the EPA's designation of passive tobacco smoke as a human carcinogen, but said the report will "feed into the process" of workplace rule-making now under way at the Labor Department agency.

The EPA's scientific advisory panel finished its review of the subject in late October, approving a report which concludes that environ-

mental tobacco smoke is a "Class A" human carcinogen — a group that includes a handful of substances such as asbestos, arsenic and benzene. Secondhand smoke, the panel estimated from a variety of studies, annually causes the lung cancer deaths of approximately 3,000 U.S. adults.

The report also blames secondhand smoke for hundreds of thousands of cases of childhood respiratory illnesses such as bronchitis and pneumonia, and for increasing the severity of asthma attacks in children.

Public health advocates hailed the news that EPA would take the final step in endorsing the scientific panel's conclusions, which is scheduled to take place Thursday at a news conference with Reilly and Health and Human Services Secretary Louis Sullivan.

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